

*Civilisation and Races of Southern
Italy* 421

the refining of sugar into Sicily; as silk-weavers,
they were as skilful as the Greeks themselves,
and in the art of pottery, as distinguished as the
ancients.

The history of Sicily as a part of the great
Moslem world is illuminated by many Arab
poets and travellers of that century. Of the
work of
the poets, born in the island or
connected with it,
a great deal remains, illustrating the
relations of
the Christians and the Moslems, and
the power
and splendour of the Norman kings.
The reign
of Roger II. was like a joyous morning
to the Arab
singers of Sicily, but it was the morning
of a brief
day; the sudden eclipse of their hopes
is reflected
in the poet Abd-al-Halim—"I loved
Sicily in my
first youth: she seemed to me a garden
of immortal
felicity, But scarce had I come to
mature
years, when behold, the land became a
burning
gehenna,"*

It is fortunate for our knowledge of
the Sicilian
kingdom that the three most
distinguished travel-
lers of the twelfth century visited and
described
the island which was the meeting
place of East
and West; namely Edrisi, whose work
we have
discussed, the Jew Benjamin of Tudela,
and the
Arab Ibn-Jubair, The latter, a Spanish

Moslem
of Valencia, came to Sicily in 1183 and
spent some
year and a half there or in south Italy;
a descrip-
tion of what he saw and recorded will
give us the

* Amari, *B, A, S., H.,* p, 434; see also for Arab
poetry, Schadk,
Potsfo *far Araber in Sicitien «. Spanien,*